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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E  
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SUBJECT: GODJ DISSOLVES OPPOSITION PARTY FOR "INVITING  
ERITREAN INVASION"

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Against the backdrop of ongoing tensions around the Djibouti-Eritrea border, the GODJ has outlawed an opposition political party for allegedly inviting Eritrea to invade Djiboutian territory. A July 9 presidential decree dissolves the opposition party MRD (Mouvement pour le Renouveau Democratique, or Movement for Democratic Renewal), and liquidates its assets. As state-run media lambasted the MRD and its leader for "high treason" and prominently printed the alleged letter, the MRD and its leader denied the charges and argued that the letter was a fabrication. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On July 9, Minister of the Interior Yacin Elmi Bouh announced that President Guelleh had issued a decree dissolving the opposition MRD (Mouvement pour le Renouveau Democratique) party. The MRD formed part of the three-party opposition coalition UAD (Union pour l'Alternance Democratique, or Alliance for Democratic Alternation) that boycotted February 2008 legislative elections. The GODJ accuses the MRD's leader--Daher Ahmed Farah, resident in Brussels--of writing an open letter to President Isaias, inviting Eritrea to attack Djibouti. Several government-operated news sources claimed to have obtained a copy of the alleged letter, dated July 6. The decree, which was prominently printed in the state-run newspaper "La Nation" on July 10, dissolves the MRD for "inviting the Eritrean Head of State to invade the Republic of Djibouti," and thereby attempting to attack Djibouti's "national independence, territorial integrity, and security of State." The decree liquidates the assets of the MRD, and is effective immediately.

¶3. (SBU) State-run media featured prominent, vehement coverage of the dissolution. An article posted on the website of state-run Radio Television Djibouti (RTD) commented that "After sneaking abroad, skillfully rooting out resources from international NGOs and associations, (and) refusing to take part in the democratic settlement of the elections, it was necessary that our opposition passed to a superior stage. And it was in this cynical logic that the present crime of high treason and plotting with a foreign power became inevitable."

¶4. (U) The state-run newspaper "La Nation" published a reproduction of the alleged letter in its July 14 edition. The reproduced letter, which bears no signature, states that there are "no human rights or liberty of expression" in Djibouti, and asks President Isaias to "finish this royal regime" so that the opposition can govern the country "in transparency."

¶5. (U) In a response posted on the MRD website on July 15, Farah criticized Guelleh's "arbitrary dissolution" of the party and called the alleged letter "unconvincing." The MRD claims that the published document was a significantly doctored version of an entirely different press release, pointing out the absence of a signature, and inconsistencies

in the style of what it identifies as the forged paragraphs.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Post has seen no concrete proof either way that the alleged MRD-Isaias letter is either authentic, or a fake. As the GODJ and the MRD trade accusations and counter-accusations, definitive information on the letter is not likely to emerge, and is even less likely to end the argument. The dissolution of the MRD is probably irreversible. However, given the MRD leader's residence in Belgium, self-proclaimed MRD activity will likely survive the party's legal disappearance on Djiboutian soil. END SUMMARY.  
WONG